

# CRISIS RESPONSE



An exhibition of art created in times of conflict and catastrophe from the assassination of JFK to 9/11

November 8, 2002-January 12, 2003



# INVOKING ICONS

A group of works in this exhibition emphasizes the differing investments of individuals and groups in the icons of patriotism. Some artists borrow and transform recognizable icons and symbols to invite a dialogue with their viewers about the role of patriotism in troubled times. Jasper Johns has used the image of the American flag throughout his career. Initially, he appropriated it in his work as he did other familiar graphic symbols, such as targets, numerals, or beer cans; but in his 1969 *Flag (Moratorium)*, Johns used the image of the flag, recast in its complementary colors, to critique U.S. involvement in Vietnam. David Hammons altered the “the red, white, and blue” with politically ironic results in his *African American Flag* (1990), which calls into question just who and what the flag represents. His work suggests that it is a symbol that typically operates to obscure differences and inequities, smoothing over friction between individual identity and the national community. Dave Cole made *American Flag No. 1* – a mixed media relief that incorporates toy soldiers – when he returned to his Providence studio after helping with recovery efforts at Ground Zero in September of last year.

In another assemblage sculpture, *TKO*, artist Pepón Osorio places tiny objects and icons that he associates with his native Puerto Rico in a velvet-lined box that also contains images of the political figures whom he holds responsible for decades of corruption and violence.

In the face of even the worst circumstances, art can reconfigure our understanding of the world. Its force is perhaps less immediate and brutal than that of crisis or catastrophe, but it can change our mental perspective all the same. Art lifts our senses, challenges our intellects, thwarts apathy, disturbs our sense of comfort and security, confirms and soothes our own suffering. The works in this exhibition remind us that as individuals we are participants in history, not passive victims.

KARL SCHOONOVER

*Curatorial Assistant, Department of Contemporary Art, The RISD Museum*



# POLITICAL TURMOIL>>>>

Whether through natural disaster, disease, war, terrorism, or political turmoil, crisis reshapes the world as we know it. It may strike quickly, but its effects are lasting. It challenges artists who live and work in its wake. Do they return to their studios and resume labor on pre-crisis projects? Do they alter the nature and content of their work? Art inspired directly by current events is often deemed too topical to be of lasting value. This viewpoint falsely assumes that artists require geographic or historical distance from a crisis in order to produce works of quality and broad appeal. Consider such precedents as Francisco Goya's print series *Disasters of War* of ca. 1810; George Grosz's work of the 1910s and 20s; and Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*, 1937. What about artists who live in a time or place continually immersed in turmoil and catastrophe? For them, the luxury of detachment is impossible.

The harrowing events of 9/11 have affected not only our view of the world today, but also how we look at art. The issues faced by artists living under difficult circumstances suddenly have become more relevant to many of us. While considering the idea for *Crisis Response* and examining the Museum's holdings from this new perspective, it became apparent that many artworks in the collection are visual responses to social and political crises. We continued our search in artists' studios, private collections, and galleries.

Although limited to works made after 1960, the scope of this exhibition is broad and its definition of crisis inclusive. The art on view approaches crisis from diverse viewpoints and various conceptual frameworks as represented through a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, printmaking, costume and textiles, and video. Despite the differing tones of these works – compare the gritty violence of Sue Coe's drawing entitled *9-11* (2001) to the more abstract and contemplative nature of Ross Bleckner's print *Antibody Diversity* (1999) – they are not restricted by their content. Many may force us to confront political concerns, but none fall into political banter. All reveal a tension between what is immediate and what is universal. They also share a belief in the ability of art to change perception of events, to change behavior, and to aid recovery and reconciliation.







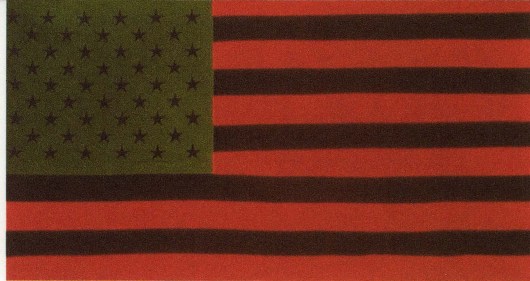
# > DISEASE >>>>> WAR >>>>>







DAVE COLE, *American Flag No. 1*, 2001. Courtesy of the artist.



DAVID HAMMONS, *African American Flag*, 1990. Courtesy of the artist and Artemis Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York.

Like Villalobos Echeverría, Cuban artist José Bedia works from the crises of cultural and social dislocation. His *¿Toda la vida así?* (1991) laments the human figure who must place his feet carefully and negotiate a difficult balance in order to survive. The rope and dangerous symbolic landscape also suggest the artist's own precarious position of maintaining a connection to Cuba's indigenous traditions and pre-revolutionary religions without surrendering to that nation's political isolation. Luis Cruz Azaceta's painting *Self-Portrait as Mechanized Doggie* shows the influence of New York graffiti style and of works by Leon Golub, Max Beckmann, and Francisco Goya. Azaceta's paintings from the mid-80s may be seen as highly expressionistic representations of the artist as exile. The self-portrait on view conveys an alienation caused not only by living in an aggressive urban environment, but also by the expatriate artist's sense of "not belonging."

The imagery and text in *Restless Sleepers/Atomic Shroud* reveal the ongoing fears of artist Robert Morris about the escalation in nuclear armaments and the expansion of nuclear power facilities in the early 1980s. This work suggests that it is hard to sleep soundly in such a world. David Wojnarowicz imagines the earth exploding after an environmental disaster. While the catastrophe depicted in his two *Science Lesson* pieces (1982-84) may strike the viewer as fantastical, Wojnarowicz's vision of the end of the world was based on his critique of corporate greed and how it had corrupted the global political sphere. What remains so relevant about Wojnarowicz's project today is its effort to elaborate visually a connection between the destruction of the environment – either through pollution or war – and society's mistreatment of human beings, particularly members of the working poor and minority groups. Wojnarowicz carried the imagery found in these two pieces – the globe, spray-painted silhouetted figures, flames, and falling animals – into later work that directly addressed the AIDS crisis.



# »TERRORISM



Last October, as many Americans were trying to get past the terrible images of 9/11, artist Carolee Schneemann worked toward getting closer to the fugitive but devastating experiences of that day. She was unready to distance herself from its horrors. By manipulating images saved from newspapers, the artist created a disturbing and intimate vision of the last seconds of four people's lives as they jumped from the collapsing World Trade Center buildings. In her grid of enlargements, Schneemann virtually reanimates some of 9/11's most troubling moments in order to foster what she calls "visual concentration as eulogy."

Richard Hamilton followed a similar approach when making his 1970 print entitled *Kent State*. Deeply troubled by US involvement in Vietnam, the artist photographed television coverage of the confrontation between anti-war student protestors at Kent State University in Ohio and the National Guardsmen who opened fire on them with tragic consequences. He then experimented extensively with screen-printing processes, until the result most closely resembled the color and resolution of an image on television.

Crisis has also triggered a broadened attitude about the role of art in our culture. Melding the traditions of documentary film-making, political activism, and performance art, some contemporary artists have turned to video as a medium capable of capturing and commenting upon social experience. One video in particular, *Habit* by Gregg Bordowitz, is both an intensely intimate self-portrait, describing the artist's own daily struggles with HIV and AIDS, and also an examination of the political complexities that surround this global epidemic. To the same effect, but in another manner, the pieced and embroidered Hmong story cloth by Mai Vang uses a traditional craft format to create a testament to and refusal of attempts to destroy her people and their culture.

« SUE COE, *9-11*, 2001 (detail). Private Collection.

# THE SUDDEN BLOW»»»»



JASPER JOHNS

American, b. 1930  
*Flag (Moratorium)*, 1969  
Color photo-offset lithograph  
on paper; 22 3/4 x 28 3/4  
Collection of Mark Lancaster

*Flag*, 1983

Encaustic on silk flag on canvas;  
11 5/8 x 17 5/8  
Private Collection

DINH Q. LÊ

Vietnamese, b. 1968  
*Untitled # 5*, 1998  
C-print and linen tape; 20 x 86 1/2  
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W.  
Gallery, New York

ROY LICHTENSTEIN

American, 1923-97  
*Sweet Dreams Baby* from the portfolio  
*11 Pop Artists, Volume III*, 1965  
Color screen print; 35 5/8 x 25 1/2  
Museum Purchase with funds from  
the National Endowment for the Arts  
75.111

ROBERT MORRIS

American, b. 1931  
Created at The Fabric Workshop,  
Philadelphia  
*Restless Sleepers/Atomic Shroud*, 1981  
Silkscreen on linen; 2 sheets, each  
114 x 90, 2 pillowcases, each 20 x 36  
Courtesy of The Fabric Workshop and  
Museum, Philadelphia

PEPÓN OSORIO

Puerto Rican, b. 1955  
*TKO*, 1989  
Mixed media; 6 1/4 x 14 5/8 x 11 3/8  
closed, 13 5/8 x 14 5/8 x 15 1/2 open  
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund  
2001.30

CATALINA PARRA

Chilean, b. 1940  
*Sinusitis*, 1981  
Plastic, x-rays, gauze, fur, thread, yarn;  
72 x 56  
Gift of Ronald Christ to the Nancy  
Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin  
American Art 83.069

WALID RA'AD

Lebanese, resides Lebanon and U.S.,  
b. 1967  
*The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs*,  
1996-99  
16:54 min. color video  
Courtesy of Video Data Bank, Chicago

VARIOUS FORMER RISD STUDENTS

*Thirteen posters*, late 60s-early 70s  
Screen prints  
Museum Collection (11) and Collection  
of John Prip (2)

ARNALDO ROCHE-RABELL

Puerto Rican, b. 1955  
*Nadie es Profeta en su propia tierra*  
*Nobody is a prophet in his own land*,  
1993  
Oil on canvas; 77 1/2 x 77 1/2  
Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern  
Latin American Art 1994.026

JAMES ROSENQUIST

American, b. 1933  
*Mirrored Flag*, 1971  
Color lithograph with metallic mylar  
collage on paper; 29 x 22 3/8  
Museum Purchase with funds from the  
National Endowment for the Arts  
72.150

EDWARD RUSCHA

American, b. 1937  
*Serious Injury*, 1972  
Brushed gunpowder on paper;  
11 1/2 x 29  
Museum Purchase: Gift of the  
Associates 75.063

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN

American  
*Terminal Velocity*, 2001  
Black-and-white computer scans  
on paper; 35 units, 12 x 16 each,  
84 x 80 overall  
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W.  
Gallery, New York

*Viet-Flakes*, 1965

7 min. black-and-white toned film trans-  
ferred to video, sound collage by James  
Tenney  
Courtesy of the artist and Electronic  
Arts Intermix, New York

PHILIP TSIARAS

American, b. 1952  
*Sandwich Descending a Skycase*, 1992  
Mixed media on canvas (21 stacked  
panels); 18 1/8 x 21 x 17 (diamond)  
Promised gift of Karen Schneider

MAI VANG

Laotian/Hmong, b. ca. 1939  
*Pa ndau* (story cloth), ca. 1989  
Polyester/cotton cloth, appliqué,  
embroidery; 67 1/4 x 101 1/2  
Walter H. Kimball and Georgianna  
Sayles Aldrich Funds 1989.091.2

PATRICIA VILLALOBOS ECHEVERRÍA

Nicaraguan/American, b. 1965  
*Epicenter I-IV* from *The*  
*Terremoto/Earthquake Series*, 1997  
Oil paint and screen print on silver gela-  
tin prints; 40 x 40 each  
Courtesy of the artist and Jacob Karpio  
Gallery, San José, Costa Rica

ANDY WARHOL

American, 1928-87  
Five prints from the portfolio  
*Flash-Nov. 22, 1963*, 1968  
Color screen prints on paper:  
21 x 21 each  
Gift of Alyce and Michael Burke  
80.005.1-.5

*Race Riot*, 1964

Oil on canvas; 30 x 32 7/8  
The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection  
of Twentieth Century American Art  
68.047

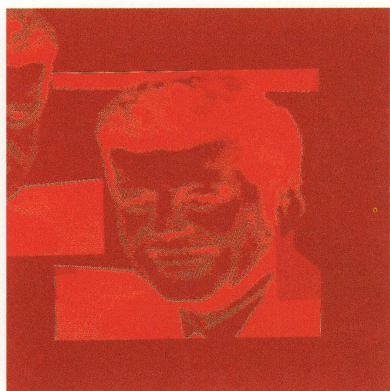
DAVID WOJNAROWICZ

American, 1954-92  
*Science Lesson*, 1982-83  
Spray paint and stencil on mounted  
photographs; 4 panels, 96 x 164 overall  
Private Collection

*Science Lesson Sculpture*, 1984

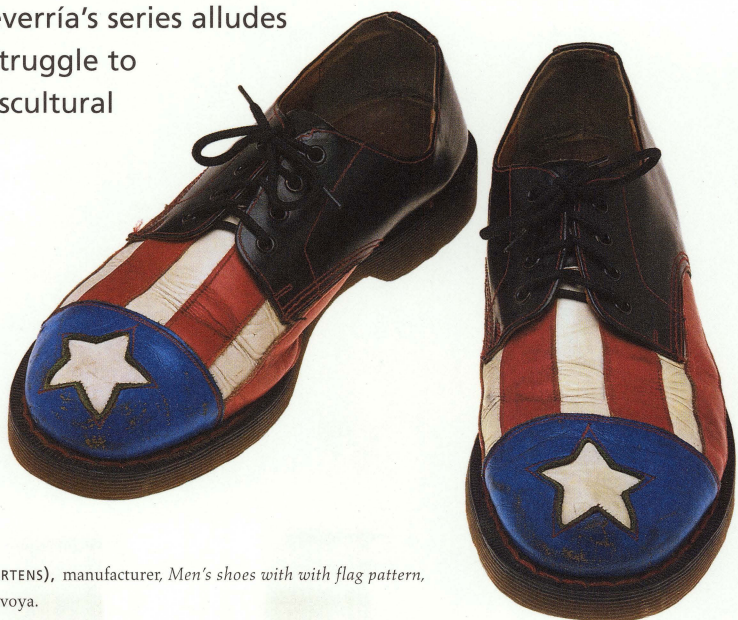
Mixed media; 32 h. x 14 diam.  
Private Collection





ANDY WARHOL (from left), *Book Depository*, *JFK*, *Italian Carbine* from the portfolio *Flash – November 22, 1963*, 1968. Gifts of Alyce and Michael Burke.

The force of earlier crises continues to resonate years later. Andy Warhol revisited the assassination of President John F. Kennedy five years after the fact in his 1968 print portfolio *Flash – November 22, 1963*. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated and an attempt on Warhol's own life occurred in the same year that Warhol created this series. For Patricia Villalobos Echeverría, the 1972 earthquake in Managua, Nicaragua, was a crucial event in her childhood there. In the *Terremoto/Earthquake* series, she restages this natural disaster in a group of disturbing self-portraits. In doing so, she symbolically connects the earthquake's dead and injured to the victims of the decades of political violence that plagued Central and South America. On a personal level, the violated body in Villalobos Echeverría's series alludes to the artist's struggle to embody a transcultural identity.



DR. MARTENS (AKA DOC MARTENS), manufacturer, *Men's shoes with with flag pattern*, ca. 1990. Gift of Ondine Chavoya.





# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width, precedes depth. For prints, drawings, and photographs, dimensions given are for paper size.

## LUIS CRUZ AZACETA

American, b. Cuba, 1942  
*Self-Portrait as Mechanized Doggie*,  
 1984  
 Acrylic on canvas; 72 x 120 overall  
 (diptych)  
 Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern  
 Latin American Art 85.085

## JOSÉ BEDIA

Cuban, b. 1959  
*¿Toda la vida así?*  
 (All My Life Like This?), 1991  
 Acrylic on canvas, rope;  
 67 1/2 h. x 117 1/2 diam. (half circle)  
 Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern  
 Latin American Art 1992.025

## ROSS BLECKNER

American, b. 1949  
*Antibody Diversity*, 1999  
 Color spit-bite aquatint on paper;  
 40 x 30 1/2  
 Mary B. Jackson Fund 2002.66

## LEE BONTECOU

American, b. 1931  
*Amerika*, 1966  
 Graphite, charcoal, ink wash on paper;  
 19 3/4 x 27 1/8  
 The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection  
 of Twentieth Century American Art  
 72.051

## GREGG BORDOWITZ

American, b. 1964  
*Habit*, 2001  
 52:23 min. color video  
 Courtesy of Video Data Bank,  
 Chicago

## ENRIQUE CHAGOYA

Mexican, resides California, b. 1953  
*Les Aventures des cannibales*  
*modernistes*, 1999  
 Color lithograph, woodcut, chine collé  
 on bark paper; 7 1/2 x 92  
 Nancy Sayles Day Collection of  
 Modern Latin American Art 2000.20

## SUE COE

British, b. 1951  
*9-11*, 2001  
 Graphite on paperboard; 30 x 40  
 Private Collection

## DAVE COLE

American, b. 1975  
*American Flag No. 1*, 2001  
 Mixed media and acrylic on panel;  
 24 x 31 x 3  
 Courtesy of the artist

## JIM DINE

American, b. 1935  
*Drag – Johnson and Mao*, 1967  
 Color photo-etching on paper;  
 31 1/4 x 47  
 Museum Membership Fund 68.096

## DR. MARTENS (AKA DOC MARTENS),

manufacturer  
 English  
*Men's shoes with flag pattern*,  
 ca. 1990  
 Leather upper with composition sole;  
 12 l.  
 Gift of Ondine Chavoya 2002.95.26a,b

## LEON GOLUB

American, b. 1922  
*The Brank* from the portfolio  
*The Atelier Project*, 1984  
 Color offset lithograph on paper;  
 29 7/8 x 21 3/4  
 Gift of Milton R. Neaman 1987.104.7

## RICHARD HAMILTON

British, b. 1922  
*Kent State*, 1970  
 Color screen print on paper;  
 28 3/4 x 40 1/2  
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Brooke Alexander  
 73.075

## DAVID HAMMONS

American, b. 1943  
*African American Flag*, 1990  
 Cotton cloth, dyed; 60 x 93  
 Courtesy of the artist and Artemis  
 Greenberg Van Doren Gallery,  
 New York

## YVONNE JACQUETTE

American, b. 1934  
*Operation Desert Storm*, 1991  
 Photogravure, drypoint, dremmel tool,  
 chine collé on paper; 30 1/16 x 22 3/4  
 Gift of the Printmaking Department,  
 RISD 1991.091

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**This brochure is made possible by Sally and Howard Lepow.**

The **RISD** Museum

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 Rhode Island School of Design  
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